

585 is considered in this chapter while the non-*mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

788 There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.'¹ (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.'² (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'³

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala*' as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

II

796 The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of
[787] *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*.
• [805] It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit *mūhurta*, which means a 'particular division of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.⁴

796 The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned,
346 and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

¹ *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge, 1933 (2nd edition), p. 235.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.

⁴ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 825.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' 796
 is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as in- 777
 clusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspicious-
 ness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are
 auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds
 in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which
 mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *pañchāṅga* which may 796
 be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Pañchāṅgas* are 777
 nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a 805
 Coorg house to have a *pañchāṅga*. It is frequently referred to as it
 gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days
 on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one
 may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur,
 and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu 787
 theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to [815]
 Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events
 like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes 805
 from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes,
 and they are all mentioned in the *pañchāṅga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the [77]
 more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more
 does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is [79]
 Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to
 the whole of India.

IV

Mangala has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but 796
 also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in 778
 his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he 783
 has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins,
 Okkaligas, and Gaudas may enter all parts of the ancestral house.
 Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved
 yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washer-
 men (Maḍivāla), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house
 except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, how-
 ever, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

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62/ Every village in Coorg, and occasionally two or three villages together, celebrate either annually or once every few years the festival of a village-deity. These festivals have the same structure all over Coorg Proper, and a description of any one of these festivals gives one an idea of the religious life of the people. But this should not lead one to conclude that there are not any important differences between the festivals of different village-deities.

[805] The ritual life of a Coorg is regulated with reference to the very accurate solar calendar which prevails in the Tulu-Malayālam and Tamil-speaking areas.¹ The festival of a village-deity starts on a certain day in a particular solar month, and goes on for seven or nine or eleven or fifteen or twenty-one days according to local custom. Local custom again decides the length of the interval between two festivals: it may be a year or two years or more.

The festival of a village-deity usually begins with the *tappadaka* ceremony at which all² the assembled villagers take a vow to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions till the evening of the *nammé* or 'festival day' which occurs towards the end. At the Kundat Bhadrakālī festival, the tenth day is the 'festival day' and the dietetic restrictions are broken on the tenth night. The eighth day of the festival is the *paṇi* or 'fast day', and on this day villagers have to subsist on pancakes and the sweet liquid dish, *pāyasa*.

There is a lull in the ritual after the administering of the vows till the 'fast day'. It does not, however, mean total absence of ritual: some routine ritual acts such as the beating of drums and dancing before the temple of the deity are performed. Also preparations are made for the later important days: the roads and the approaches to the temple are cleared of weeds.

The eighth and tenth days are important days, as mentioned earlier. On the twelfth day there is a dinner for all the men in the village (excluding the Brahmin priests), and the 'village goat' (*ūradu*) and the two village fowls (*ūru kōḷi*), sacrificed to Bhadrakālī on the tenth night, are cooked and eaten at this dinner.

¹ The people in Kannada and Telugu countries regulate their ritual life mainly with reference to the lunar calendar. But the upper castes need to refer to the solar calendar also for some of their festivals and ritual.

[783] ² Poleyas are usually excluded from participation in these ceremonies. They are either totally excluded from the festival or, where they are allowed to participate, they do so at a different level from the rest. The Mēdas are never excluded from the festival, but are allowed to participate at a different level from the high-caste people on the one hand and the Poleyas on the other. Custom, in this respect, varies from village to village.

"If I killed this pattern of righteousness, my sins could never be forgiven," he says to himself. He declares to the cow, that she may return in safety to her calf and her herd, takes a desperate leap high into the air, and falls down dead before the good cow. This is the Coorg lay of the cow, consisting of one hundred and odd verses.

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b. The Huttari-feast.

The Huttari-feast is held in honor of the annual rice-harvest. The name is derived from the Malayalam Pudi-ari, new rice, and by the rules of Coorg grammar transformed into Huttari. The festival occurs in the month of Scorpio which succeeds Libra. The day of the Coorg-festival depends upon the day fixed by the Malayalam Astrologers for the celebration of the New-rice-festival in the month of Leo. The Malayalam festival takes place two months before that of Coorg, because the rice on the coast ripens two months earlier. If the Malayalam festival of the First-fruits fall upon the first day of the Simha-māsa, that of Coorg is held on the first day of Vrishchika-māsa; if the Malayalam festival be on the second day of that month, the Coorg holidays commence on the second day of this month, and so on. (Simha-māsa corresponds to our September—October, Vrishchika-māsa to our November—December.)

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[805]
[787]

The Huttari is the great national festival of the Coorgs and of the Holeyas. It is a heathenish Christmas season, a sort of Saturnalia. The real holidays are only seven in number, but both Coorgs and Holeyas, who stand in an ancient and intimate relation to each other, generally add two or three more days of feasting and merry-making to the great week. On this occasion, as well as on the great Kávéri-day, Brahmins are in no way wanted. Nor could they well officiate in a Coorg kitchen on the Kávéri-day, or preside over the pork-and-brandy-feasts in the merry days of Huttari.

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